The strong ties of the family system are probably the fundamental reasons for this lack of strangeness. One is a member of the family, even if in another part of the island or of the world. This sense of belonging, to be emphasized later, is not only an emotional feeling but is a basic fact of social organization. Relationships, regardless of their geographic spread, are a binding force. It is true that these become weaker with the remoter relationships of the extended family, but they are still strong enough to blunt the edge of individual frictions that might otherwise be expected.

There was a niche into which a returning person might fit, whether he was a parent, a first son, an elder brother, an uncle or niece of the head of the household. The repatriates who had been long absent were, in turn, able to make an adjustment to conditions in the island of their birth because they had continued the same social system in their foreign residence. They now had to function in a more restricted and less well endowed natural environment. Dissatisfactions took the form, as they still do, of longing for better economic opportunity which they hope will be realized through further opportunities for emigration. They make comparisons, unfavorable to Okinawa, regarding the ease of making a living in other countries. Repatriates from Japan, who have returned to Okinawan rural life, miss the cities and the more exciting life of that country. Among those who have travelled, there is also a more noticeable discontent and dissatisfaction with the loneliness of rural life. The word sabishii is often on their lips.

The ideas of the repatriated Okinawans, furthermore, are not a new phenomenon in contemporary village life. They did not bring back points of view unknown before. In the past these had been communicated by letters and rare visits to the homeland. The reports of the repatriates were richer, more detailed, and more concrete, but not completely different. They have--and this is probably one of their chief influences on post-war village life--stimulated the strong desire of the villagers to emigrate. Life is hard on the island, and their accounts of greater return for the same expenditure of work have quickened hopes of future emigration. These hopes are confined to the New World, Japan, and the Pacific islands. There is no enthusiasm for migration to other islands in the Ryukyu chain.

4

Attitudes Toward Birth Control

There is little in the religious belief or in the cultural tradition that would induce, in large segments of the population, a strong antipathy to birth control on religious grounds, but these beliefs and traditions are not favorable to it either. Respect for ancestors and the need for the continuance of the family system are the most important of these. It is the duty of each generation to provide this continuity between the past and the future. The links in this chain are male children. Once this

601

Step-mother	keibo
Step-father	keifu
Adopted son	yōshi
Adopted daughter	yōjo
Illegitimate child	shiseiji
Person living with a family but not a relative	dōkyonin

Descent is reckoned through the male line. Normally the first son succeeds to the headship of the house, and this is actually true in the great majority of cases, although the failure of the first or later sons to survive to maturity, or the death of sons in the war, have resulted in many household headships being held by sons other than the first, or by daughters. This is brought out in the following table which shows the relationship of the present head of the household to the preceding head. 611 592

592

Relationships may be obscured to simple observation because the head of the household (koshu) may reside in a foreign country. This was a common occurrence before the war during the widespread Okinawan emigration, but repatriation since the war has reduced the number of heads of households who live in foreign countries. At present most absentee heads live in Peru, Brazil, or in Argentina. In the absence or disability of the first son, the second and succeeding sons assume his place, not legally, but in practice, and should the elder son return, his younger brother would relinquish the headship and establish a branch family. The family register, however, is not changed to show the temporary head. But his absence may be indicated by a notation. [167]

592 562

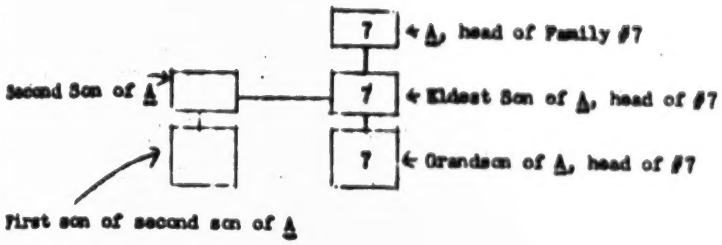
A woman, either a wife or a daughter, is not considered in the succession if there are eligible male heirs, but in their absence, she may succeed to a house. The war produced many instances of this. A mother with minor children is the head of the house and has disposition of the family property, but custom and usage circumscribe her freedom of action. In custom, a mother with minor children, especially if one of them is a boy, is regarded as the trustee and caretaker of a house and its fields during the minority of her children, the eldest of whom, if he is a son, will become head when he reaches maturity. In practice, widows with minor sons do not sell or dispose of their property except under strong economic compulsions, and then only after discussion with representatives of the extended family.

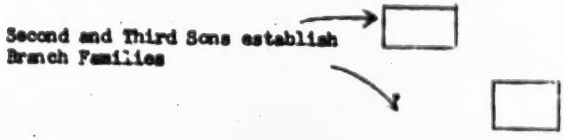
592 [591]

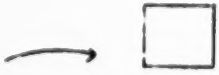
The real place of the woman in the family system is to become part of the family of her husband. If she marries a first son, she enters the home of her husband's parents. If she marries a second or a third son, she is part of a branch family established by her husband. There is general agreement among Okinawans with whom I consulted that the residence of a young wife with the husband's family does not result in the prolonged quarreling and bickering which have made the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship so legendary a topic in Chinese and Japanese society. Disagreements exist, but according to residents in [606]

[Text Continues Top of P. 95--analyst]

613
596







[597]

The family system, through the succession of the first son to his father's house, prevents the extinction of the main family line, and at the same time creates branch families with close ties with the parent family. [611]

Lacking a son, adoption (to be discussed below) is available to provide against extinction of any family, but in Okinawan villages it has seldom been necessary to use it. [597]

The emphasis in the family system is on providing for the eldest son who succeeds to the father's estate. The sons other than the first must be prepared to accept little or nothing, in the case of the very poor, when they marry and separate themselves from the parental house. [428]

In these Okinawan villages, the second and succeeding sons (or younger brothers if the head of the house is the eldest brother) remain in the family until marriage, usually around 25. They do not live in separate houses, but may have separate rooms, or a small shack in the compound for sleeping purposes. Unless they live in another town or work

593
[582]
[513]